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NEWS RELEASE

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Nov. 8, 1999

Contact: Fraser McLeay, senior manager, Montana World Trade Center, (406) 243-6982.

UM OFFICIALS SEEK \$50 MILLION IN PROJECTS THROUGH VISIT TO REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA

MISSOULA —

The Montana World Trade Center at The University of Montana is working to forge business partnerships between the state and the Republic of Georgia. MWTC Executive Director Arnie Sherman and other officials flew to Georgia Nov. 6, seeking contracts and consulting arrangements valued at more than \$50 million.

Their trip is partially funded by Ecolink, the Eurasian American Partnership for Environmentally Sustainable Economies. The goal of the visit is to follow up discussions started this summer when the Georgian ambassador to the United States visited Montana. Sherman's group hopes to secure contracts for Montana that will be awarded during the next several months.

"Through the help of Ecolink, the MWTC's membership and the University, we are able to make this timely and important visit to talk to Georgia's environmental, business and political leaders," Sherman said. "We are trying to secure two contracts in particular that, if we are successful, would not only be an achievement in and of themselves, but would put us in a position to work in the region for years to come."

Georgia could become a vital trade partner, especially since increasing oil production in the Caucus region will be delivered through the country. In addition, Georgia's geography is such that the country could become an important source of water in the region. The United States, through entities such as the Agency for International Development and the World Bank, is

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working to improve Georgia's economic and environmental infrastructure.

"The knowledge base we have here in Montana can be extremely valuable in these efforts," Sherman said. "Like Georgia, our economy is based largely on natural resources and agriculture."

The Montana group hopes to secure a \$30 million World Bank grant to develop market-based solutions to environmental and sustainable-resource development problems – especially water supply and sanitation issues. This grant would go to the Montana Environmental Consortium, a group of Montana-based environmental companies organized by MWTC.

MWTC, UM and the Arthur D. Little consulting firm also have applied for a \$12 million U.S. AID grant. This money would help Georgia in areas such as legal reform, development of credit institutions and development of small- and medium-sized companies in a resource-based economy.

"We have engineers and specialist in Montana who are among the most knowledgeable worldwide in dealing with many of the issues facing Georgia," Sherman said. "We hope to convince their decision-makers that we are well-suited to help them."

Other members of the Montana team are David Aronofsky, UM legal counsel, and Phil McCreedy, director of the Montana Environmental Consortium. They will be assisted by Greg Guroff, who is based in Georgia and serves as an MWTC consultant, and Chip Erdman, a former Montana Supreme Court justice now developing legal code in Sarajevo.

For more information, call MWTC at (406) 243-6982. MWTC, located in the UM Gallagher Business Building, is a nonprofit organization providing customized consulting to help Montana companies realize international sales and expansion goals.

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